Lesson 9

Essential questions: How do we best teach English language learners? What can we take away from teachers who do it well?

Laura will ask students if there are any announcements. For next week, she will ask students to please write a paragraph detailing what they think the author’s main point is, the degree to which they agree with the argument, and why based upon their own schooling experiences. Go into detail with at least one of your experiences. (5 minutes)

Laura will review the essential questions we have been thinking about. She will then ask students to share any lingering thoughts or questions they have over Sean’s presentation. She will share her own thoughts on the question of immigrants and college, and some of her own experiences in the Phoenix teen mother program. (20 minutes)

Kyle will return students to their subject matter groups from last week (NOTE: I liked these groups, and we might use them a bit more in the coming weeks). He will review the task we ended upon: to develop a set of academic concepts that we could post in our room to help students learn words important to academic success that they would not come across in everyday conversation. Examples: theme, hypothesis, analyze, number line, verb, sentence or pretty good ones, while scissors and snack, while very important, are in a different category. Kyle explains BICS and CALP with overhead, and helps students think through the difference. Briefly asks groups to review their list, and separate their items into BICS-type ones, and CALP-type ones. Kyle will also show everythingESL website that he took this information from. (20 minutes)

Laura will then tell students that we are going to watch a video to get inside the classroom and see this distinction between BICS and CALP in action. Students should create a T chart. As they watch, they should write down all the academic concepts they see Ms. Moraes’ teaching, all the BICS-type words, and her strategy for helping students understand them.

 376.25 [Ms. Moraes's Lesson: Part 1](http://ellib.stanford.edu/?q=node/179) (<http://ellib.stanford.edu/?q=node/179>)

Students are given a few minutes to discuss in their groups their answers. Laura leads them in a debrief of what they saw. (30 minutes)

BREAK

Kyle gives students 10 minutes to complete quiz, which he says is to help us and to help you see how well you comprehended the article we read for today. Students should feel free to glance back at the article as they work. Students work, and Kyle collects. (15 minutes)

Kyle asks student to bring it all together. Kyle shows students things that are important for language learning, and the role L1 plays in L2. Turn to a partner, discuss what you wrote for today about the ideal program for ELLs, and come up with some common ideas as a group. Kyle will project prompt questions, and then we will discuss as a whole group. (30 minutes)

In workshop, the last students will be allowed to lead their activities. Any final debriefing of activity should be done, including: Did you like doing this? We should both introduce the survey assignment, at least for a few minutes, and tell them it is on the wiki. Ask students to read over the assignment sheet for next week, and start a preliminary list of survey questions they can bring to workshop to share.

Microteaching reflection prompts: What did your students learn? How do you know?; What type of “input” or “raw material” did you use to jumpstart the lesson? How successful was it at getting students interested?; How successful were you at establishing a cooperative atmosphere?

How do we best teach English language learners? What can we take away from teachers who do it well?

**Explaining BICS and CALP** by Judie Haynes

Classroom teachers need to understand the difference between social language and academic language acquisition. Here is a simple description of BICS and CALP as theorized by Jim Cummins.

**Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills**

Experts such as Jim Cummins differentiate between social and academic language acquisition. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are language skills needed in social situations. It is the day-to-day language needed to interact socially with other people. English language learners (ELLs) employ BICS skills when they are on the playground, in the lunch room, on the school bus, at parties, playing sports and talking on the telephone. Social interactions are usually context embedded. They occur in a meaningful social context. They are not very demanding cognitively. The language required is not specialized. These language skills usually develop within six months to two years after arrival in the U.S.

Problems arise when teachers and administrators think that a child is proficient in a language when they demonstrate good social English.

**Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency**

CALP refers to formal academic learning. This includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area content material. This level of language learning is essential for students to succeed in school. Students need time and support to become proficient in academic areas. This usually takes from five to seven years. Recent research (Thomas & Collier, 1995) has shown that if a child has no prior schooling or has no support in native language development, it may take seven to ten years for ELLs to catch up to their peers.

Academic language acquisition isn't just the understanding of content area vocabulary. It includes skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating, and inferring. Academic language tasks are context reduced. Information is read from a textbook or presented by the teacher. As a student gets older the context of academic tasks becomes more and more reduced.

The language also becomes more cognitively demanding. New ideas, concepts and language are presented to the students at the same time.

<http://www.everythingesl.net/inservices/bics_calp.php>

Imagine you are a superintendent of a school district, and you get to design what the school program for the teaching of English to non-native speakers looks like. What will it look like? What things will it emphasize? How will you staff it? What principles will guide you? What role will the students' native language play?

Some Reminders:

Students need practice using the target language.

Correction should be done only when the focus of the activity is on form, not communication. In the case of communicative practice, use correct modeling instead.

Make sure input is meaningful—gear own language to students’ level, use human and technological aids to help translate, and provide visual context and linguistic preview for what you are doing.

Create a safe and warm learning environment so that students are not scared to practice and make mistakes.

Become familiar with your students, their cultures and their families and use these as “funds of knowledge” upon which students can build. Avoid thinking of LI and home culture as a “barrier” to success.

Use a variety of formal and informal assessment tools (diagnostic, formative, summative) to make sure you get a well-rounded picture of the student, and gain ideas about how to bring their own “funds of knowledge” into the curriculum.

Describe the Dual Language project the authors initiated in a Toronto kindergarten.

Summarize either the case of Sarah or the case of Zohreh, and what we learn from the child’s experiences.

The authors give several good reasons why we might want students to maintain proficiency in their first language (L1) at the same time as they are learning English (L2). List at least two of these reasons, and explain each in a sentence or two.